



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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FCC CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL OUTLINES CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF FUTURE SPECTRUM POLICY

Washington, DC – FCC Chairman Michael Powell today outlined four critical elements for future spectrum policy initiatives. Powell made his remarks at the opening of the final day of four public workshops the FCC Spectrum Policy Task Force has convened to seek broad industry, government and public input on spectrum policy issues.

1. More efficient use of spectrum. Powell called for more efficient use of existing spectrum, not just allocation of more spectrum.

Powell said the problem increasingly is that demand for spectrum far outstrips the amount of available spectrum. “The real challenge is how to get more use out of spectrum that 80 percent of the time lies fallow.” Powell suggested the answer relies on the empowerment of technology that will allow for more innovative uses of existing technologies like software defined radio and spectrum sharing. He also cited the need for continued use of unlicensed bands which he called “a source of innovation for showing us the vision of alternative ways spectrum can be used that are outside the traditional ‘command and control’ model.”

“The time has come to realize that there’s not a whole lot of spectrum in the closet we have back here at the FCC that hasn’t been put out yet,” Powell said. “If there was, I assure you we’d roll it out and get it out of here.”

2. Shift from a “command and control” model of regulation to market based mechanisms.

Powell said, “There is no question that we need to be able to deal with unpredictable and dynamic changes fast enough to be meaningful in the market and meaningful to consumers.” He said that the “laborious process” of government command and control “has served the country well to this point, but is futilely too slow to rapidly move things to new and better innovative uses.”

3. Reconciling critical governmental uses of spectrum with commercial uses. Powell said that both the government and commercial sectors must improve the balance and processes used for reconciling critical governmental uses with commercial uses. “At a minimum, there needs to be a better process for the management of the challenges and a more unified consensus about the concepts and principles of the use of that spectrum.”

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He said spectrum sharing should be part of the consideration and applauded the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for taking on the challenges of third generation (3G) wireless services and ultra wideband.

4. Fostering innovation. Powell said, “There has to be air for innovation and oxygen for things that none of us can predict right now.” He said there has to be “serious consideration” of new developments such as how to expand and exploit the values of the unlicensed band and how to encourage other ways to promote innovations that have yet to be identified. “Otherwise, we freeze ourselves in time to the detriment of the market, the technology and our citizens,” Powell concluded.

Powell announced the formation of the Spectrum Policy Task Force in June to assist the Commission in identifying and evaluating changes and improvements in spectrum policy. The Task Force will present its recommendations in a report to the Commission by the end of October.